/32 cont./

775 knapsack with great rejoicing to the burial-ground, where,
[766] through a hole drilled in the knapsack, the captured soul passes into the grave of the one who drowned.

• 769 In Abkhazia the dead are highly honored. The burial-
[764] grounds, as we have said, lie on high, picturesque places and are surrounded by fences. Shingled houses of a kind the Abkhaz do not make for themselves are built over the graves. Near the graves various fruit trees are planted -- apple, pear, peach, quince, etc. On the graves themselves the Abkhaz lay slices of melons, watermelons, cucumbers, etc. All this serves to confirm the belief that beyond the grave the souls of the dead require food, drink, lodging, etc., just like the living.

And in fact the Abkhaz do believe that the dead will enjoy, for example, the piece of melon placed on the grave. Because of this belief, for almost a full year after a death,
[264] a special share of each meal is laid on the table for the deceased, and banquets are held in his memory, etc. Besides this, annual funeral-feasts are held on the eve of the paternal Saturday for those recently deceased, and on the paternal Saturday itself funeral-feasts are held for those deceased longer. At the slaughter
769 of the sacrificial animal, the head of the family says, "If there
782 is a life beyond the grave, here is this (offering) to your soul." Then as food is prepared and placed on the tablecloth, the head of the family stands in front of the tablecloth and again says, "Deceased ones /33/, grant us the blessing of your souls! Do not harm us by death (mortification)! Make us and our cattle increase (multiply)! etc. At the conclusion of this invocation, he makes the sign of the cross in the air over the tablecloth with an iron spit and says, "All this, prepared by the power of fire and water, is sacrificed to your souls, if indeed there be a life beyond the grave." Having said this, the head of the family takes a glass of wine and drinks it; after this he puts pieces of the heart and liver from the sacrificed animal into a slice of gomi, pours a little wine over it, and throws it into the yard, saying:
775 "And this is for you, guiding and escorting souls." From this we
769 perceive that in Abkhaz belief the living relatives of the dead

/33 cont./

775 769 are visited by the souls of the deceased, together with other souls accompanying them. The Abkhaz believes that the more magnificently they (souls of the deceased)are met and treated, the more satisfied and generous they will be and the more co-operation and patronage they will give the living -- in the opposite situation, they would only harm the living. Those souls satisfied with their reception, upon their return to the souls of other deceased relatives, express their joy and praise the esteem paid them; unsatisfied souls, however, return extremely irritated and, when asked by the other souls about their reception, answer, "What could we have found there, if they themselves turn out to be just such dead ones as we?" The Abkhaz believe that in this case the unsatisfied souls' most terrible anger will fall on several members of the family that has thus failed to receive their relatives' souls in a proper manner.

The Abkhaz believe firmly that the souls of the deceased leave their graves and visit their living kin. They stand near [782] their houses and whistle; they are placated by the pouring of wine or the throwing out of something. These souls of the dead like to leave their graves, particularly at night; they stand near the road and when they see a traveler they run after him in pursuit. Let us hear how the Abkhaz themselves report the significance of funeral banquets:

1. "Sesrkva was a well-known and brave man. During one raid, he lost his hundred companions in a skirmish; they were all killed. Sesrkva slaughtered a large number of bulls and rams and arranged a funeral banquet for his companions. Afterwards he himself was /34/ killed in a skirmish and buried none knew where. A friend of his expressed the wish to find Sesrkva's grave in order to mourn for him. After a lengthy search he at last found it and mourned Sesrkva, and because his village was far away and the hour late, he decided to spend the night right there. Having tied his horse to a tree, he lay down under an oak and soon fell asleep. He then dreamed that Sesrkva's hundred lads were in an excellent position in the other world; they were satisfied with everything, for they treated their guests honorably and fed their horses well. But Sesrkva himself and his horse

/34 cont./

775 were wandering about hungry, feeding only upon the charity of the
769 hundred men. Having seen Sesrkva the hero in such a state, his friend asked him, Sesrkva! You surpassed everyone in the wide world. What has befallen you in the life beyond the grave that you are unable to receive even one guest? Sesrkva answered, How then can I receive guests, when I must beg for myself and my horse? When he awakened, his friend realized that no funeral banquet had been held for Sesrkva, so he immediately arranged a rich funeral-banquet for him. Once more he had a dream: Sesrkva was now in as good a condition as his hundred companions and was able to receive guests."

2. "Two persons were walking along; one of them had a fat goat, skinned and cut up, hidden in a sack. In the evening someone began to pursue them, whistling as he ran. The man with the load said to him, Leave me alone! What do you want of me? Having said this, he went his way, but the ghost followed him. His companion guessed what was the matter and advised the friend to cut off a piece of meat to throw to the ghost. The advice was taken and the piece of meat thrown -- the whistling and the pursuit stopped immediately."

3. "The people of Mokvi every year arranged their funeral banquets for the dead, who were buried in the upper part of the burial-ground, while the people of Morkvuli did not do this for the dead buried in the lower part of the burial-ground. Therefore the Mokvi dead mocked the Morkvuli dead: 'You who find nothing!' The others responded to this: 'When our kinsmen find something for themselves, we shall get something, too.' The dead gathered together at night and held dances on the aphstsa r kvashartha (place for the dances of the dead). Everybody could see the footprints of the dancing souls."

794 /35/ The souls of the dead as well as those of the living,
795 and in particular those of the witches, are capable from time
754 to time of wandering about with evil intentions, as sucking milk from nipples, drawing out the heart and liver, etc. Even the water element will not accept witches, and they do not drown in water. They have their own chief, Roskipi, who dwells

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Georgians. Thus, according to Iv. Gv. Gomelauri, the well-known pedagogue, in K'iziqi (Signakh district, in Kakhet'i) they say: *tchemi dsili ghmert'i*; *sheni dsili ghmert'i*, " my part of God," " thy part of God." A. Dsuladze, who is well acquainted with the life of the Gurian people, told me that similar expressions were also used in Guria.

Further, as the reader will see for himself, the word *an*, " mother " constitutes part of the names of a series of gods, and several of these names are of the feminine gender, as Dcharaia has also justly noticed. In this connection I should like to direct the attention of the reader to the names of two gods, namely, *jabrdn* and *zhwabrdn*.* Each of these words has in our opinion several connotations; *jabrdn* is compounded of several words: *j* is the root from the word *a-j-ma*, a goat; *a-b*, father; *r* the pronominal characteristic of the third person plural; and *an*, mother. Thus *jabrdn* denotes " father and mother of goats ", i.e. " (fore)parents of goats ", or " god of goats ". In the same manner *zhwabrdn* is compounded of *a-zhw*, a cow, and of the components just explained, so that the whole denotes " father and mother of cows ", i.e. " (fore)parents of cows ".[1] It seems to me that at the dawning of their religio-philosophical life, the Abkhasians evidently worshipped equally both their male and female ancestors. How strong is this ancestor-worship among the Abkhasians even to-day will be shown in my work *The Ancestor Cult*.

Thus, as is the case of Dcharaia, I think that the word *antswd* is derived from the word *an* in the plural. I also think that the name *antswd*, of the Supreme Being, arose from the deification of ancestors. At first it was evidently used with the plural termination, and in the feminine gender, and later, in the course of time, from " many mothers-gods " arose the One God *antswd*.[2] The changing of the gender of gods is often observed in the religions of the primitive peoples, and *antswd* therefore constitutes no exception.[3]

Antswd is One, but He is plural as to His parts. All the gods, of which we will speak below, are subject to and obey Him as the Supreme Being. In the tales, I was told, it is said that *antswd's* mother came from a Megrelian princely *gvari* of Mkheidze, the Abkhasian form of

* The combination *zhw* is to be uttered with one breath impulse; it represents a labialised variety of "*zh*" (= French "*j*"). Cf. "*tsw*", p. 118, n. *. [TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.]

[1] Such a morphological interpretation does not appear admissible, as the word *an*, if in this case it denotes " mother ", is never combined with *ab*, father, but governs the first part of the compound word, *jab* and *zhab*, which, judging from the relative infix *r*, is assumed to be plural. [Note by the Editor, *Khr. V.*]

[2] And not *dedsma*, as it should have sounded and does really sound " mothers ". See above, pp. 118–19. [Ed., *Khris. Ves.*]

[3] If this supposition turns out to be justified, and the word *antswd* is not of Sumero-Babylono-Assyrian origin (from *An*, *Awa*), its significance as a term employed in the history of religious beliefs generally will be greatly increased.

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belonging to those who have failed to propitiate her, and muttering: [796] "Corncobs (of Indian corn) of a digit size, corncobs of a digit size!" [241] But if the owner of the field succeeds in frightening her and making her say *rákʲ, dzakʲ, rákʲ dzakʲ*, "of a cubit size," he will have a magnificent harvest.

On the day of *tchatchkhadəl*, after the offering has been made to *Jaja*, the seeds are taken for the first time into the kitchen garden.

6. *Àmshap'*

Easter Day is celebrated with great solemnity by all the [796] Abkhasians. It must be noted that the Abkhasians to-day have no notion whatever of the Christian conception of this day. Even the greeting, "Christ is risen," usual on this day, is wanting in the Abkhasian language. Everyone able to afford it has a new dress made for this day. To emphasize the poverty of a person the Abkhaz says, "Even for *Àmshap'* he could not get himself new clothes." This is almost the only day when an Abkhaz considers it necessary to send to church at least one of the members of his family. And the service in the church begins early enough to enable it to be finished by sun- [782] rise. Everyone is in haste to be the first to light a wax candle and to [769] place a painted egg on the graves of their dead. The Muhammadan Abkhasians also follow this custom, although they do not light the candles. It is known that Abkhasians bury their dead near their [764] homes, in the places favoured by the deceased, and the graves, therefore, are scattered about the village. Owing to this custom the whole village is illuminated on this day of *Àmshap'*.

On this day each family must slaughter some animal. And those [782] of the Abkhasians who follow the established custom of Paschal offerings, immolate two or three animals according to what his obligation is, what he "owes"—this word denotes "obliged", "must", "owes".

(*a*) *Anṭswakhwə* (or *Anṭswakwa*).

This is a compound word, consisting of *Anṭswə*, God, and (*a*)-*khwə*, part, share, and denoting "share of God", "for God", more exactly "to render to God that which is due to Him", briefly "praying to God". On this day most of the Abkhasians reverently offer up their prayers to God; but not all of them. There are families who are "not obliged" to render to God "His share". I have already mentioned [776] that the Abkhasian makes offerings only to those gods under whose power his parents or he himself had come, and thus had become his tributary, so to speak. Very often separate members of a family have, in addition to the general family guardian-gods, their own personal

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ox of a certain colour. If the miracles you talk so much about are true, it should be an easy matter for St. George to bring my ox into this church to-night; then, certainly, I will gladly embrace your Faith.' The condition was accepted. On the following morning, early, on opening the gates, there was found within the enclosure an ox which the unbeliever recognized as his own. Thus he was convinced of his error, and embraced the Christian Faith."[1]

(c) *Indl-qwàba.*

The *T'avadi*-s Marshania, and all those Abkhasians who descended from the mountains (Dsabalaa, Dalaa, Pskhvu, etc.), offer sacrifices (a ram, without fail) in exactly the same manner to a sanctity, *Indl-qwàba*, instead of to the Ilori "icon". I could obtain no information of any kind about this "icon". Everybody I questioned gave the same answer: *Indl-qwàba* is equal in power to *Dadòrəp'sh* and the Ilori "icon".

These offerings are performed early in the morning, and serve as breakfasts. Every Abkhaz slaughters some animal for the meal (the favourite one is a castrated goat), it is often prepared on the Saturday. They also pay the customary Paschal visits. After the midday sacrificial meal they all go to the public square, where they indulge in games, chiefly football. During Easter week they also organize horse racing, the most popular sport of the Abkhasians.

7. *The Second Day of Easter*

This is a commemoration day. A variety of dishes are prepared, all of which are placed on a table by an open window. The eldest of the family, holding a candle and a glass of wine in his hands, prays to the souls of deceased relatives that they grant his family peace and happiness. Then follows the pouring of wine on the meat and wheat dishes. The whole family stand behind the supplicant. After the prayer each member approaches, places a piece of frankincense on burning embers, and pours wine on the food. Here stands too a smoking pipe. All remain seated in silence, in order that the souls of the deceased ancestors may eat in peace.[2]

The Abkhasian, as has already been stated, have no Paschal greeting such as "Christ is risen". They welcome each other with a kiss, saying: "May God grant us that we meet again next year," to which the other replies: "And for a hundred years."

[1] Quoted from the Russian and Georgian translation of A. Lamberti's *Relatione della Colchide hoggi detta Mengrelia nella quale si tratta dell'Origine, costumi e Costumi naturali di quei Paesi.* Published in Naples, 1654.

[2] This rite will be described in detail in my work *The Cult of the Ancestors.*

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796 On this day also they "lay the table", that is, prepare a dinner,
[169] for the souls of the deceased, unless the day happens to be one of abstinence, i.e. Wednesday or Friday. In the latter event the feast takes place on the following day.

(e) *Àdsyla-nɔ̀ħwa*

On the same day of the Assumption is observed *Àdsyla-nɔ̀ħwa* (cf. II (10)). The children are taken to a meadow where they are told to place their right legs against a tree. Each holding an *akwakwdr* in the right hand, they remain meekly in this position until the eldest in the family has addressed the prayer to "the spirit of the tree", entreating "the great part of the deity of the tree" to safeguard them from giddiness, from falling off the tree, and from injuries. The children must eat their *akwakwdr* without removing their legs from the tree.

(f) *Anàna-gùnda* (the goddess of bees)

796 This is both a spring and a summer feast.
231 In the spring, when the bees begin to hive, the eldest ("pure") woman of the family takes some hirse (Geo. *p'etvi*) and an egg, and
[779] enters the apiary, where she passes the offerings three times over the hives, and prays to the goddess of the bees, *Anàna-gùnda*: "Submitting these as a pledge that the established offering will be made at the proper time, I humbly entreat thee, *Anàna-gùnda*, to be the guardian of our bees; safeguard them from all illnesses, multiply them, and grant them a good crop!" Hirse and the egg are hung over the apiary.

In the summer, between the 15th July and the end of August, before the gathering of the first honeycombs, more during August,
[780] on a Thursday or Saturday, the promised offering to the goddess *Anàna-gùnda* is made. A large corncake (*a-mgal*), stuffed with cheese, is baked, and placed on one of the hives; also an egg. The family kneel in front of the offering, and the "pure" woman again invokes the mercy of *Anàna-gùnda* upon the honey bees, and says an improvised prayer. The family repeat a long drawn out *dämen*.

After the ceremony, she divides the corncakes crosswise, into four parts, with two strokes of the knife; and cuts these into smaller pieces. The family sit down there and then and dine. They do not
[621] forget the neighbours, sending a small piece each. The remains are placed in a basket and hung up in the apiary. Everybody passing by is obliged to enter the apiary and bless the honey bees and, scattering about a little hirse, eat a piece of corncake.

[178] In ancient times when the Abkhasians irreproachably observed all the rites, the gods were more merciful to them. Thus, the goddess

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Thus, the goddess
of the bees as a sign of her good disposition towards a given family placed an egg (the egg of *Anàna-gùnda*) in one of the hives. No matter how much honey they took from that hive, there would always be a plentiful supply of it.[1]

IV. K'IRSA

Christmas is one of the four chief holidays [2] of the year. Abkhasians call it *K'irsa* (Megr. *K'irsa*), which denotes Christ. An Abkhaz considers it a great disgrace if he fails on this day to kill a goat or some other animal. On this day " the table is laid " also for the souls of ancestors.

(*a*) *Agwa-nàẖwa*

For some families it is obligatory to make an offering early in the morning on this day to *Agwa-nàẖwa*, for which *akwakwàr* are baked. The supplicant entreats that *Agwa-nàẖwa* grant them the warmth of his eyes and his heart. In translation the word denotes, " praying to heart." This " praying " is also known to the Gurians, under the name of " praying for the womb " (Geo. *Mutslis salotsavi*); Megrelians call it *Khatsitsi*.[3] According to I. Kipshidze, it is the New Year's Day breakfast.[4] In my opinion it is nothing more than a survival of the supplication described below.

(*b*) *Got'anùa* (*sharp'è-nàẖwa*)

Some *gvari*-s have preserved to this day the following custom. On Christmas Eve, the family go to bed very early; they rise, however, at midnight, and begin praying. Enough chickens are killed to provide one for every member of the family (blackbirds also may be used) or in their place a young goat; *akwakwàr* baked. All this is offered to *Got'anùa*; the food is consumed immediately after the prayer is ended, and the remains, if any, are not left but burnt without fail. All return to bed. The dawn must find them asleep. In Megrelian *got'anua* denotes morning-twilight, dawn, to grow light, to dawn, the Abkhasian equivalent of which is *sharp'-nàẖwa*, the morning prayer; the Megrelian term, however, is more in use.

I quote here the following story: " A female slave of a family,

[1] *Anàna*, in my opinion, is derived from *an*, mother; *gùnda*, probably from *gundi*, a swarm, a collection of something.

[2] Namely, the New Year, Easter, the Assumption, and Christmas.

[3] *Khatsitsi—khatsitsi* is called also a bride. (Cf. I. Kipshidze, *Gram. of the Megrelian Language*, s.v. *khat'etsi*.) (Ed. *Khrist. Vostok*.)

[4] *Grammar of the Megrelian Language*, s.v. (where is also a reference to the explanation of the same word in Georgian by V. Beridze, *Sitqvishona*, s.v., Ed. *Kh. V.*).